

A woman with blonde hair in a ponytail, wearing a red plaid shirt and an orange life vest, is paddling a green kayak on a calm lake. The background shows a sunset with warm orange and yellow light reflecting on the water. The entire image is framed by a blue border with a green inner line.

The News Reporter's

OUTDOORS GUIDE

**Hunting, Fishing
& Outdoor Fun in
Columbus County**

August 29, 2024

Recreational Flounder season starts Sept. 1

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) approved a temporary amendment to the flounder rule at their business meeting on July 25th that was subsequently approved by the N.C. Rules Review Commission (RRC) on July 31st. Under this modification, the 2024 flounder season will be open in Inland Fishing Waters and in Joint Fishing Waters for hook and line fishing only on Sept. 1 and 2 and again on Sept. 7 and 8. The daily creel limit is one fish with a minimum size limit of 15 inches.

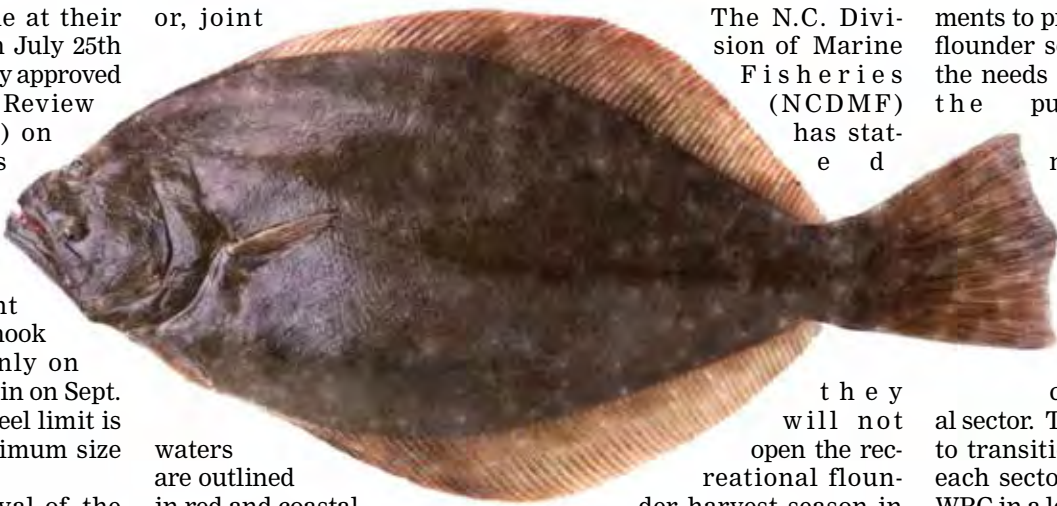
“With the approval of the NCWRC and RRC, there will be a lawful recreational flounder season in both inland fishing waters and joint fishing waters for hook and line only,” according to NCWRC Executive Director Cameron Ingram.

The designations for inland and joint fishing waters can be found online using the agency’s fishing access area map and

zooming in on the Coastal Region where inland waters are shown with no color, joint

stand fishing effort and flounder harvest during the shortened season.”

The N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF) has stated



waters are outlined in red and coastal waters are outlined in blue.

“Wildlife Commission fisheries biologists will be conducting a flounder harvest creel survey during the open season dates at many boating access areas,” said NCWRC Assistant Chief of Inland Fisheries Corey Oakley. “We look forward to speaking with anglers to better under-

stand the recreational flounder harvest season in 2024 due to the recreational sector exceeding the 2023 harvest allotment last year. Initially, the NCWRC proposed a temporary rule to close the flounder harvest season in 2024 in its jurisdiction, all Inland Fishing Waters and hook and line fishing in Joint Fishing Waters, to remain consistent with the NCDMF. However, after review-

ing and considering the available data and public comments, the NCWRC adopted amendments to provide a limited 2024 flounder season that balances the needs of the resource and the public.

The harvest allotment for flounder, as set by the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission (NCMFC), is currently split 70 percent to the commercial sector and 30 percent to the recreational sector. The split is scheduled to transition to 50 percent for each sector by 2026. The NCWRC in a letter from Chairman Monty Crump requested the NCMFC to accelerate the transition to a 50 percent split for 2024 and allow a recreational season coastwide. The four-day season approved by the NCWRC was calculated to allow recreational anglers an opportunity to harvest fish without exceeding the allotment, if the allocation was shifted as requested.

About the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
Since 1947, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission has been dedicated to the conservation and sustainability of the state’s fish and wildlife resources through research, scientific management, wise use and public input. The Commission is the state regulatory agency responsible for the enforcement of fishing, hunting, trapping and boating laws and provides programs and opportunities for wildlife-related educational, recreational and sporting activities.
Purchase or a renew a fishing, trapping and hunting license and renew a vessel registration online at gooutdoors-northcarolina.com.
Get N.C. Wildlife Update — news including season dates, bag limits, legislative updates and more — delivered free to your Inbox from the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission.
— Contributed by N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission

Kayaking dos and don'ts

Kayaking is a healthy and enjoyable activity that attracts new enthusiasts all the time. Part of what makes the sport so popular is the relative ease with which people can get started. Kayaking requires minimal gear (kayaks can be rented if not purchased) and no advanced skills are required. However, kayaking is not to be taken lightly, as water sports can be unpredictable. Adhering to certain dos and don'ts can make kayaking safer.

- DO choose the right boat. There are boats rated for kayak racing and those that are strictly for recreational purposes. Some boats are meant for calmer waters and others for waves and open seas.

- DON'T forget to check the weather forecast before heading out in the water. Storms can come up relatively quickly, and offshore winds can make it challenging to paddle back to shore.

- DO let someone know where you're going and how long you

plan to be out on the water.

- DON'T touch or get too close to wildlife, as animals can be unpredictable and even dangerous.

- DO dress for the water temperature and not the weather outside. This helps ensure your health if you intentionally or accidentally enter the water.

- DON'T skip wearing a life jacket/buoyancy aid.

- DO expect to get wet, even if you do not fall in. Splash up

will occur from paddles and some water will get in the boat regardless.

- DON'T forget to bring along some snacks and water.

- DO bring a fellow kayaker along. Whether you're a novice or a seasoned professional, bringing a friend along ensures someone can go for help if you're involved in an accident or suffer an injury.

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Dove season opens Monday

The 2024-25 hunting season for mourning and white-winged doves opens Monday, Sept. 2. The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) reminds seasoned and novice hunters about the importance of being properly licensed, observing state and federal regulations and following safe hunting practices.

Dove hunting season will be separated into three segments: Sept. 2-Oct. 5, Nov. 9-Nov. 30 and Dec. 16-Jan. 31, 2025. The daily bag limit is 15 mourning or white-winged doves, either as single species or combined, and shooting hours are from 30 minutes before sunrise to sunset. Hunting of migratory game birds, including doves, by any method is not allowed on Sundays. It is illegal to dove hunt with a shotgun that can hold more than three shells unless it is plugged with a one-piece filler incapable of removal without disassembling the gun.

Migratory game bird hunters, including lifetime license hold-



ers, are required to register in the federal Harvest Information Program (HIP). HIP is a survey method developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to collect more reliable estimates of migratory game bird harvests throughout the country. HIP certification is available July 1-April 1 and expires June 30 each year.

Hunters can purchase or renew their license and obtain their HIP certification online for immediate use in the field. Hunters can also purchase and renew their license at a Wildlife Service Agent office.

It is a violation of state and federal law to take migratory game birds with the use or aid of salt, grain, fruit or any other

bait. Additionally, hunters need to be aware that an area is considered baited for 10 days following the removal of all salt, grain or other feed. Migratory game birds may be hunted in agricultural areas where grain has been distributed as the result of normal agricultural operations. Information regarding agriculture and planting techniques

may be obtained from a local N.C. State Extension Center. Visit the agency's website to view an interactive map of game land dove fields.

Hunting safety is a priority when in the field. Free hunter safety courses are available through NCWRC. Wildlife Law Enforcement Officers advise dove hunters to follow these safety tips:

- Adhere to established safe zones of fire.
- Ensure you have the correct ammunition for your firearm.
- Keep the muzzle of your firearm pointed in a safe direction.
- Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.
- Do not shoot at low-flying birds.
- Do not place decoys on utility lines.

View more information about dove hunting in the 2024-25 North Carolina Regulations Digest.

— *Contributed by N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission*

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Is that a bear den? Do not disturb!

Wildlife Agency offers help to identify Bear Dens and suggests actions if one is discovered

What may initially appear to be just a pile of brush, a crawl space or a hollowed-out tree, may actually be the winter home of a bear, and possibly its cubs. If disturbed by humans, a bear may be inadvertently flushed from the den, and if it's a female bear with cubs, she may orphan her cubs if humans do not leave the area immediately. Biologists at the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) recommend, if someone encounters a bear den, to remain calm, leave the area quickly and quietly, and do not disturb the den for the rest of the winter season.

Black bears are very resourceful in finding places to shelter from November through April as cubs are born and cold weather lingers. Dens come in many types and sizes, and exist in both wooded and developed areas, including neighborhoods. Bears have even been known to slumber in backyard brush piles, under decks and in crawl spaces. Black bears also use rock and tree cavities and excavations under fallen trees, or they build ground nests for their long winter nap. If the den is found under a deck, shed or crawl space, leave the area and call the NC Wildlife Helpline at 866-318-2401, or contact your local district wildlife biologist for further guidance. But in almost all cases, the best option is to simply stay away from the den area.

"We have experienced an uptick in bears denning under houses and decks over the last 10 years, as well as unleashed dogs disturbing bears in dens," said Colleen Olfenbuttel, NCWRC's bear expert. "Homeowners can safely coexist with the bears until they leave the den in the spring. This is because a denning bear is only interested in getting their winter rest or, if it's a female, caring for her cubs. Denning bears are not interested in engaging with people as long as people leave bear dens alone. Disturbances by humans or their pets may cause the bear to leave permanently and orphan her cubs."

NCWRC staff have been receiving reports from the public about the discovery of bear dens since November. In one case, a



Bear den in a tree



Bear den in the brush with cubs

homeowner discovered a female with newly born cubs underneath their back deck.

"The bear seems to have given birth in early January, when the homeowners were alerted to the sound of cubs crying under their deck," said Ashley Hobbs, NCWRC's statewide BearWise coordinator. "After speaking with the homeowners and inspecting the den site, we recommended the best course of action was to limit disturbance around the deck area until the bear emerges with her cubs in the spring. This will avoid disturbing the female and potentially orphaning the cubs."

Hobbs also developed a plan for the homeowners to close the space under the deck once the bears vacate to prevent future access by bears and other wildlife. "The homeowners were receptive to the recommendations, and supportive of the steps they could take to coexist with the bear family."

If NCWRC staff determine a cub has been orphaned in a den, they will capture and bring it to one of the licensed bear cub rehabilitation facilities with the goal to eventually return it to the wild. Since 1976, NCWRC has been rehabilitating and releasing orphaned black bear cubs through its cub rehabilitation program, which was one of the first of its kind in the country. NCWRC advises if someone believes a cub has been orphaned in a den, to not handle, feed or remove it from the area. Instead, note the location and contact the N.C. Wildlife Helpline at 866-318-2401, or your local district wildlife biologist for further guidance.

For more information on black bears visit [Bearwise.org](https://www.bearwise.org).

— *Contributed by N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission*

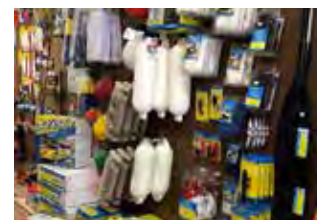
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Let the hunting begin....



Eastern Bear Season

Zone 5: Nov. 11, 2024-Jan. 1, 2025

Small Game

Armadillo: No closed season

Beaver: Refer to Regulations Digest

Bobcat: Oct. 14, 2024-Feb. 28, 2025

Coyote: No closed season

Crow: Aug. 2, 2024-Feb. 22, 2025, and June 4-July 30, 2025. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday of each week. Crows may also be hunted on Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Independence Day; except when these days fall on a Sunday.

Feral Swine: No closed season

Fox: refer to ncwildlife.org/fox-seasons

Groundhog: No closed season

Grouse: Oct. 14, 2024-Feb. 28, 2025

Nutria: No closed season

Pheasant (male only): Nov. 23, 2024-Feb. 28, 2025

Quail: Nov. 23, 2024-Feb. 28, 2025

Rabbit: Oct. 14, 2024-Feb. 28, 2025

Raccoon and Opossum: Oct. 14, 2024-Feb. 28, 2025

Skunk (striped): No closed season

Squirrel — gray and red: Oct. 14, 2024-Feb. 28, 2025

Squirrel — fox: Oct. 14, 2024-Jan. 31, 2025

Waterfowl

General duck season: Oct. 25-26, 2024; Nov. 9-30, 2024; and Dec. 18, 2024-Jan. 31, 2025



Deer Season

Archery: Sept. 7-27, 2024

Blackpowder: Sept. 28-Oct. 11, 2024

Gun: Oct. 12, 2024-Jan. 1, 2025

Mergansers: Same as general duck season

Coots: Same as general duck season

September Teal (includes green-winged, blue-winged and cinnamon teal): Sept. 12-30, 2024 (East of U.S. 17)

Canada Goose (September season): Sept. 2-30, 2024 (statewide)

Doves and other webless migratory game birds

Mourning doves and white winged dove: Sept. 2-Oct. 5, 2024; Nov. 9-30, 2024; and Dec. 16, 2024-Jan. 31, 2025

King and Clapper Rails: Sept. 2-Nov. 21, 2024

Sora and Virginia Rails: Sept. 2-Nov. 21, 2024

Gallinule and Moorhens: Sept. 2-Nov. 21, 2024

Woodcock: Dec. 11, 2024-Jan. 31, 2025

Common Snipe: Oct. 28, 2024-Feb. 28, 2025



Wild Turkey Season

April 12-May 10, 2025

(Youth only)

April 5-11, 2025

Includes a total of six ducks with no more four total sea ducks (no more than three scoters, three eiders (one hen eider), or three long-tailed ducks, four mallards (no more than two hen mallards), three wood ducks, two redheads, two canvasbacks, two black ducks,

one pintail, one mottled duck and one fulvous whistling duck.

Prior to Jan. 9 the scaup bag limit is one; on Jan. 9 and after it is two.

The season on harlequin ducks is closed.

— Contributed by N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission



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Safety measures all hunters should take

Hunting draws millions of people into the great outdoors every year. Many avid hunters feel hunting is a great way to actively participate in nature while also taking responsibility for procuring one's own food.

Hunting requires discipline, dedication, patience, and, perhaps most important, a commitment to safety. By prioritizing safety on each hunting trip, seasoned and novice hunters alike are acknowledging the potential dangers of this beloved outdoor activity while doing everything they can to ensure the trip is as safe as possible. Because safety plays such a vital role in successful hunting trips, hunters of all experience levels can benefit from a refresher course on the safety measures they should take each time they go on the hunt.

• **Treat all firearms as if they're loaded.** Treating all firearms as if they're loaded ensures hunters won't be

tempted to engage in the kind of fooling around that can contribute to tragic accidents. This approach can reduce the risk of firearm-related accidents or injuries, and can be an especially effective way to teach youngsters about the dangers of firearms and the correct ways to mitigate those dangers.

• **Keep your finger off the trigger and only point at what you plan to shoot.** Keeping your finger off the trigger until you're ready to shoot ensures you won't accidentally discharge your firearm. In addition, never point your firearm at anything other than what you plan to shoot.

• **Know the forecast and dress appropriately.** Firearms are not the only risk to hunters' safety. Inclement weather can put hunters at the mercy of Mother Nature. According to



the Mayo Clinic, hypothermia, which occurs when the human body loses heat faster than it can produce heat, can affect hunters who are unable to get out of wet clothes or move to warm, dry locations as their bodies lose heat. In addition, hunters may be at risk of hypothermia even

if temperatures are hovering around 50° F. Before embarking on a hunting trip, hunters should read the forecast of the areas where they will be hunting and dress accordingly. Outer layers that repel water can help keep hunters dry, and hunters also should avoid wearing cot-

ton, which retains moisture and can increase their risk for hypothermia. Clothing made with moisture-wicking fabrics is a great alternative to cotton.

• **Share your plan with others.** Returning home safe is the ultimate goal for hunters, and that's more likely to happen when hunters share their hunting plans with others. Let someone, ideally a spouse, parent, roommate or sibling, know when and where you will be hunting and when you expect to return. Direct this loved one to call the local authorities if you do not call by a predetermined time. This can dramatically reduce the time it takes to find you if you become injured on your hunting trip and prove unable to get back to your vehicle safely.

Millions of people across the globe enjoy hunting. Avid hunters know that no hunting trip is successful if safety is not the utmost priority.

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Tips for hunting on private land

- Always remember that access to private property is a unique privilege.

- Whenever possible, seek permission to hunt on private property in advance and always be considerate of the landowner's time by being brief.

- If you are denied access by the landowner, remain polite, say thank you for your time, and do not expect an explanation. A negative reaction by you could have future repercussions for both you and others.

- Get to know the property and its boundaries and don't enter any property without written permission (Note: Sportsmen now need written permission, dated within the past 12 months, signed by the landowner or lessee, to hunt, fish or trap on private lands posted with signs or purple paint. (See Landowner Protection Act on the Where to Hunt page on the NCWRC website)

- Always respect the landowner's wishes by abiding to all rules, requests and instructions and ask questions relative to anything that is unclear.

- Remember to hunt only in those areas designated by the landowner, and do not drive or park on any roads or trails other than those specified.

- Always practice safe firearm handling in the field, and be an example for all hunters by



hunting safely and ethically.

- Do not litter, and pick up any litter you notice while hunting on private property. It will go a long way toward showing the landowner that you care and respect their property and the privilege to hunt.

- Never assume that permission to hunt is good for a lifetime. Be sure to ask for permission every season unless instructed otherwise by the landowner.

- Be careful not to damage any fences, and leave all gates as you found them. Report any damage you notice as soon as possible to the landowner.

- Always let the landowner know what time you expect to arrive and depart, and what species you'll be hunting. This way the landowner can manage for number of hunters and thereby prevent the possibility of safety issues or over-hunting the property.

- Provide the landowner with an information sheet containing your name, address, telephone numbers, and make, model, color and license plate number of your vehicle. This information can save valuable time in an emergency.

- Never show up with a group of people if you have requested permission solely for yourself.

- Do not erect any permanent tree stands or prune trees without permission from the landowner.

- Show appreciation for access by offering to share your game bag or providing assistance to the landowner.

- Follow up with a thank-you note or card to show appreciation for access to property.

- Remember that when you are given the privilege to access private property, you are doing so at your own risk. Never expect the landowner to be responsible for your safety and the safety of your hunting partners. For this reason, you should acquire personal liability insurance for yourself and/or your hunting club.

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Winners from the COLUMBUS COUNTY OUTDOOR PHOTO CONTEST



Keri-Ana Bartley, Evergreen



Keith Green Sr. Lake Waccamaw Sunrise



Ashley McPherson. Noel Bellamy, his first time duck hunting last year!



Alexis Todd. Little Duck Hunter



Abby Pritchett. Halloween Sunset



John Ball. Cousins Make The Best Friends



Jeremy Sullivan w/ Karli Sullivan. "Flight Canceled"

The photos displayed here are the top vote-getters in The News Reporter's 2024 Columbus County Outdoor Photo Contest, which was held online at NRcolumbus.com from July 30 to Aug. 20. A big thank you to the 114 photographers who submitted their beautiful photos and the 970 voters who participated, helping make this celebration of our county's natural beauty a great success.

We extend special congratulations to the top three winners: Keri-Ana Bartley, Keith Green Sr. and Ashley McPherson, whose photographs are featured on the opposite page. Be sure to check NRcolumbus.com/contests and The News Reporter for information about upcoming contests.



Jessica Williamson. *Under Pink Skies*



Dakota Holden. *Farming the Sunflowers*



Kenneith Strickland. *Our granddaughter, Olivia, playing in the field as I plant pumpkins.*



Brent Watts. *Banks Watts*



Karen Mitchell. *Gold rush 2024! featuring Jocelyn & Josiah Mitchell at Lake Waccamaw*



Morgan Schultz. *Sunflower field in Whiteville*



Brent Watts. *Briggs Watts*



Karen Anne Ware-Rudnik. *Lake Waccamaw, June 2024.*



Lisa Best. "You haven't lived life until you've lived on a dirt road. A road full of endless memories from family and friends, outdoor cookouts, four wheel racing, deer hunting, animal and vegetable farms, and mud sliding, to saying goodbye to a clean car. Endless moments of getting stuck in the swamp, dust flying, bumps in the road, and let's not forget surviving the never ending floods. Lastly, plenty of space to know everyone by their first and last names but little to no cell and internet service.

As most say, and to sum it all up... 'God made dirt and the dirt don't hurt.'
Never forget where you come from."

Make camping more comfortable

The call of the wild can be irresistible. Camping enthusiasts often insist there's nothing better than sleeping beneath a star-filled sky, and anyone who's experienced a night under the stars would likely find it hard to argue that point.

Comfort and camping are not exactly synonymous. In fact, many people look forward to roughing it in the wild and intentionally eschew comfort in an effort to create what they feel is a more authentic camping experience. But those who want the best of both worlds can try various strategies to combine camping and comfort.

- **Focus on a good night's rest.** A good night's rest can be elusive for novice and experienced campers alike. Thankfully, campers can explore various options to make their nights out in the wild more conducive to sleep. The outdoor recreation experts at REI note that there are three types of sleeping pads: self-inflating, air and closed-cell foam. REI recommends air pads or closed-cell pads for backpackers, as these are lightweight options that won't make backpacking more difficult. Self-inflating pads work better for car camping, as these are heavier but also thicker and wider than the alternatives, providing more



comfort and support. Bring along a pillow from home or an inflatable camp pillow for added comfort.

- **Invest in a good cooler.** It's easy to take food and beverages for granted when planning a camping trip. However, when camping for a weekend or longer, a good cooler can ensure food and beverages stay cold without forcing campers to make routine ice runs. Lightweight coolers with thick walls and sufficient insulation won't prove a chore to lug to and from the campsite and they will be highly effective at keeping meat, fish and beverages cold during your trip.

- **Increase your body heat before going to bed.** Nighttime temperatures can dip even when camping in summertime. Few people find it easy to fall asleep when they're cold, but a few simple tricks can ensure you're warm and comfortable when it's time to call it a night. REI recommends wearing long underwear overnight and putting on a fresh pair of clean, dry socks before going to bed. In addition, eating a light meal or snack before bed will start the digestion process, which can warm your internal body temperature and make it easier to sleep comfortably.

- **Spice things up.** Food cooked over an open flame is undeniably delicious, but it's easy for campers to forget that such meals are made even better with spices. But foods made around the campfire need not be bland. Spice bottles are portable and don't take up much space. Salt and pepper are must-haves, but it's easy for campers to tote along additional favorite spices to make mealtime that much more palatable.

Camping and comfort may not go hand in hand. But there are many ways for campers to enjoy a comfortable night in the great outdoors.

— Contributed by Metro Creative



WILDLIFE ACTION

The local members of Wildlife Action wish to say "Thank You!" to all our community friends and associates who have worked so hard and given selflessly of their time and money throughout the years. Your volunteer efforts have been the key to making our family and children's educational programs and activities successful! We appreciate and are grateful for all that you have done!

- Education
- Conservation
- Preservation
- Sportsmanship
- Fellowship



Archery and canoeing at Pioneer Day Camp - Helms Nature Preserve, Whiteville, NC

Wildlife Action, Inc. is a non-profit (501-C (3)) volunteer organization dedicated to raising public awareness of the many threats to our diminishing wildlife habitat and natural resources. Our primary focus is on children's education programs. We share with our youth the outdoor traditions that we have enjoyed and together work to protect those traditions for future generations through programs such as "Take a Kid Fishing Day," camping, boating and hunter safety classes, summer camps with canoe trips, and archery, bluebird and duck box building days. To fund these programs we rely solely on member dues, charitable donations, and fund-raising events. We are currently developing and building Helms Nature Preserve & Resource Education Center in Whiteville in order to better serve our community and provide increased resources for our many children's programs and activities.

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How outdoor activities benefit kids

Modern amenities and indoor comforts have made life easier in many ways, but they've also helped to fashion a generation of people who spend much of their time inside. A 2018 report from the international research firm YouGov found that around 90 percent of study respondents from North America and Europe spend close to 22 hours inside every day. Children may get a little more time outdoors than adults, particularly if they participate in outdoor sports.

There are distinct advantages to engaging in more outdoor activities. Here's a look at some of them.

• **Improved mood and reduced risk of depression:** The YouGov report notes that around 15 percent of the world's population is affected by different levels of seasonal affective disorder, which is believed to be a direct result of lack of daylight. Symptoms go away when days are longer and individuals can enjoy more sunshine. Children who go outside and get ample exposure to sunlight may experience a more positive mood and renewed energy.



• **Lower risk of obesity:** Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg from the American Academy of Pediatrics says outdoor play can help reduce obesity in today's youth. Children can enjoy self-directed physical activity that also stimulates awareness of one's surroundings.

• **Improved vitamin D levels:** Vitamin D has been dubbed the "sunshine vitamin" be-

through healthy exposure to sunlight.

• **Lower stress levels:** Students of all ages are faced with stressful situations that come at them from every angle. The arrival of the global pandemic has been an added stressor that continues to affect children and

cause sunlight hitting the skin prompts the liver and kidneys to create vitamin D in the body. A deficiency in vitamin D can lead to depression and heart failure and may compromise the immune system. Children can improve current and future health by maintaining adequate vitamin D levels

adults. According to research by the University of Essex, outdoor exercise offers mental health benefits that exceed those gleaned from indoor exercise. Spending time in a green space can result in improved mood and self-esteem. A 2017 study of Japanese students found those who spent time in the forest for two nights returned home with lower levels of cortisol, a hormone used as a marker of stress, than students who remained in the city. The practice of de-stressing outdoors is often referred to as "forest bathing" or "nature therapy."

• **Better focus:** A dose of nature may help children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder improve their concentration levels. A 2008 study from researchers at the University of Illinois found that children with ADHD demonstrated greater attention performance following a 20-minute walk in a park as compared to a residential neighborhood or downtown area.

Getting outside and engaging in any activity has a variety of benefits for children and adults.

— *Contributed by Metro Creative*

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A few ways to enjoy the outdoors in Columbus County

Lake Waccamaw State Park

The state park offers public access to Lake Waccamaw, a shallow Carolina bay lake that's one of the largest natural bodies of water between New York and Florida. The park includes more than 2,000 acres of forest and shoreline. Amenities include a boat ramp, primitive campsites, hiking trails, a long boardwalk that extends into the 3x5-mile lake, and a visitors' center with regular programs.

The Lumber River Riverwalk

The riverwalk offers beautiful lowland scenery, with access located in downtown Fair Bluff. Enjoy a casual stroll by the river, or, if you are seeking adventure, use the boat ramp for kayaking or canoeing.

Veterans Memorial Park of America

Just south of Whiteville, this memorial park honors past, present and future veterans for their service to our country.

Columbus County Parks and Community Centers

Columbus County Parks and Recreation maintains over twenty parks and community centers across the county, each with



Children enjoy the inclusive playground at the Julie M. Strickland Fitness Park in Whiteville.

unique amenities. Residents and visitors of all ages can use walking trails, softball

tures. The Julie M. Strickland Fitness Park in Whiteville is one of the newest additions and includes a walking track, a Fitness Court outdoor gym facility and an inclusive playground for children and adults of all abilities.

Whiteville Butterfly Trail and Murals

Stroll around Whiteville and you'll see beautiful butterfly murals all around town. Civic organizations and clubs sponsored these public art projects created by local artist Bess Taylor. Take a selfie or just enjoy the butterflies at the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences at Whiteville, Columbus County Arts Council, Columbus Regional Healthcare System, Vineland Storage, Columbus County Community Farmers Market, Julie M. Strickland Fitness Park and various downtown locations.



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Wildlife Commission wild turkey harvest totals

Results from the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission's (NCWRC) 2024 Wild Turkey Harvest Summary report show that hunters recorded 24,074 birds harvested statewide in 2024, including 2,372 birds taken during the youth season. Hunters harvested 15 fewer turkeys than last year's record total, making the 2024 Spring Turkey season the second-highest year on record. Both the Mountain and Coastal ecoregions reported increases in harvest numbers compared to the 2023 season, particularly in the Coastal region.

"Turkey hunting continues to be very popular in North Carolina, with this year's total harvest statewide being 8% higher than the average of the previous three years," stated Hannah Plumptre, NCWRC's upland game bird biologist.

To put this year's wild turkey harvest in perspective, Plumptre compared this year's harvest to the average harvest of the last three years. Each season

was five weeks, including one week for youth hunters under the age of 18. The results concluded:

- Harvest during the week-long youth season increased by 11%.

- Harvest in the Coastal region increased by 13%.

- Harvest in the Mountains increased by 8%.

- Harvest in the Piedmont increased by 2%.

- Harvest on game lands increased by 5%.

- Number of adult gobblers harvested increased by 11%.

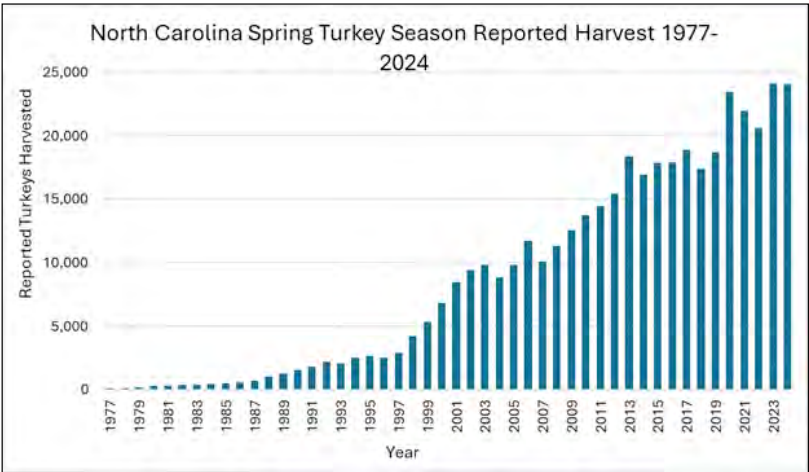
- Number of jakes harvested decreased by 10%.

- Jakes comprised 10% of the harvest, a 1% decrease.

The top five counties for the number of turkeys harvested were Duplin (872), Pender (694), Halifax (612), Columbus (598) and Brunswick (589). Four other counties had more than 500 turkeys harvested. When considering the size of the counties, the top five counties for the number of turkeys harvested per square mile were Duplin, Franklin, Northampton, Halifax and Chowan.

NCWRC posts annual harvest summaries on its website for all game species, as well as live harvest reports that are available throughout the hunting season.

— Contributed by N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission



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Looking for family-friendly outdoor activities?

Children who spend a lot of time outdoors benefit from exposure to nature in myriad ways, some of which may surprise even the most devoted outdoorsmen.

According to a 2006 study published in the journal *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*, fifth graders who attended school at a local prairie wetlands where lessons in science, math and writing were integrated in an experimental way had significantly stronger reading and writing skills than their peers who attended more traditional schools. Another study published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* found that holding a class outdoors one day a week significantly improved the daily cortisol patterns of students, reducing their risk of stress and improving their ability to adapt to stress.

Parents who want their children to reap the rewards of being exposed to the great outdoors can encourage educators to incorporate nature into school curriculums and also embrace these family-friendly outdoor activities.

- **Nature treasure hunt:** A treasure hunt in nature can keep kids engaged on family hiking excursions and provide an



excellent opportunity for parents to teach children about the assortment of plants, birds and wildlife that live in the parks and along the trails near their home.

- **Outdoor art class:** Families don't even need to leave their properties to

spend quality time together outside. Pick a pleasant afternoon and set up an outdoor painting station, encouraging everyone to paint what they see. Fall is a great time to host an outdoor art sessions thanks to the assortment of vibrant colors that have become syn-

onymous with autumn landscapes.

- **Bonfire:** Outdoor activities need not be limited to daylight hours. A post-dinner backyard bonfire can entice everyone outside, where families can tell scary stories as they make s'mores.

- **Stargaze:** Stargazing is another way families can spend time outdoors and learn a few things at the same time. Some blankets, a thermos of hot cocoa and a chart of constellations can provide the perfect complement to a sky full of bright stars. If visibility is compromised in the backyard, find a local spot where everyone can get a clear view of the night sky.

- **Fruit picking:** Apple picking is a popular autumn activity, but families need not wait for the autumn harvest to enjoy a day picking fruit or vegetables at a nearby farm. Visit a local farm during its harvest season, teaching children about how the foods they love are grown and eventually make it to the family dinner table.

Families looking to spend more time together in the great outdoors can look to a number of activities people of all ages can enjoy.

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Great places to visit in celebration of America's national parks

The National Park Service in the United States has been around for more than a century. Created in 1916, the National Park Service was initially tasked with protecting the country's 35 national parks and monuments. Today, the National Park System comprises more than 400 areas that cover more than 84 million acres in 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, Saipan, and the Virgin Islands.

The growth of the National Park Service is proof of the undeniable allure of the great outdoors. The call of the wild can be answered anywhere in the United States, and the following are some must-see locations that fall under the purview of the National Park Service.

Alabama • Little River Canyon National Preserve

Alaska • Denali National Park • Glacier Bay National Park

Arizona • Grand Canyon National Park • Petrified Forest National Park

California • Joshua Tree National Park • Redwood National Park • Sequoia National Park • Yosemite National Park

Colorado • Great Sand Dunes National Park • Rocky Mountain National Park

Delaware • First State National Historical Park

Florida • Everglades National Park • Dry Tortugas National Park

Hawaii • Haleakala National Park

Idaho • Yellowstone National Park (extends into Montana and Wyoming)

Kentucky • Mammoth Cave National Park

Indiana • Indiana Dunes National Park

Maine • Acadia National Park • Roosevelt Campobello International Park (a

cooperative effort between the U.S. and Canada)

Michigan • Isle Royale National Park • Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore;

Minnesota • Voyageurs National Park • Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway (extends into Wisconsin)

Missouri • Gateway Arch National Park • Ozark National Scenic Riverways

Montana • Glacier National Park • Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area (extends into Wyoming)

Nebraska • Niobrara National Scenic River

Nevada • Great Basin National Park

New Jersey • New Jersey Pinelands • Gateway National Recreation Area (extends into New York)

North Carolina • Great Smoky Mountains National Park (extends into Tennessee)

North Dakota • North Country National Scenic Trail (extends across various states)

Ohio • Cuyahoga Valley National Park; **Oregon** • Crater Lake National Park • Lewis and Clark National Historical Park (extends into Washington)

South Carolina • Congaree National Park;

South Dakota • Badlands National Park • Wind Cave National Park

Texas • Big Bend National Park • Big Thicket National Preserve

Utah • Arches National Park • Canyonlands National Park

Virginia • Blue Ridge Parkway (extends into North Carolina) • Cumberland Gap (extends across various states)

West Virginia • New River Gorge National Park.

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